



PURSUING HAPPINESS

“Do you want to be happy?” The splash on a magazine cover caught my eye and made me chuckle.

Surely everyone wants to be happy; and you’d think that after millennia of philosophers and theologians tackling the problem—not to mention the self-help books and articles published every year on the topic—we’d have figured out the formula! So how easy is it to be happy?

Consider what Abd-ar-Rahman III, the Emir and later Caliph of Córdoba in the 10th century, had to say: “I have now reigned above fifty years in victory or peace, beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches, honors, power, and pleasure have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation, I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot; they amount to fourteen.”

Only 14?! If someone like that could hardly ever find it in himself to be happy, what chance is there for the rest of us? For some reason, the more we pursue happiness, the more it seems to elude us, remaining just beyond our reach.

God expects believers to be happy. “Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!” (*Psalms 144:15*), King David confidently proclaimed. Yet I’ve felt unhappy on occasion, so what am I doing wrong?

I think my problem is that I look at happiness as a destination, a place I’ll be at when I can achieve this goal, go on that vacation, get that dream house or car or job—maybe win the lottery—whereas it’s really the scenery that I could experience along the way as I draw closer to God and reach out to others. Rather than a goal in itself, I’m learning that happiness can be the byproduct of a life lived on good terms with God and my fellow man.

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